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**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for launching balls for sports practice comprising:

a tank (2) for housing a gaseous fluid under pressure;

a launch tube (3) whose section substantially corresponds to that of a ball (4) to be launched, said tube having an open end (7) for launching the ball (4) and having a seat (8) for positioning the ball (4);

an exhaust duct (5) of the fluid operatively connected between said tank (2) and said launch tube (3); and

a rapid opening device (6) for discharging on command said fluid from said tank (2) to said launch tube (3) through said exhaust duct (5), to cause the launching for the ball (4); and throttling means (37) mounted in said exhaust duct (5);

characterised in that said throttling means are adapted to be adjusted for varying the effective section of the exhaust duct

such that effective section determined by the throttling means remains the same during a whole launch.

2. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1 characterised in that said throttling means (37) comprises a fixed part (38) and movable part (39) relative to the fixed part (38), the displacement of said movable part (39) relative to said fixed part (38) determining a variation in the effective section of the exhaust duct (5) in correspondence with throttling means (37).

3. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 2 characterised in that said movable part (39) is constituted by a bulb obturator.

4. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 2 Characterised in that said movable part (39) is constituted by a sleeve whose outer wall (40) slides proximity to the fixed part (38) and which has a narrowing (41) in corresponding with its own inlet section for the fluid, and one or more slits (42) extending astride the fixed part.

5. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 1 characterised in that said throttling means (37)

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comprise one or more interchangeable ring nuts (61), each ring nut (61) defining a different throttling of the fluid transit section in the exhaust duct (5).

6. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in ~~any of the previous claims~~ claim 1, characterised in that said quick opening device (6) comprises at least main valve (9) with rapid opening which controls the discharge of the fluid from the tank (2) to the exhaust duct (5).

7. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 6 characterised in that said quick opening device (6) further comprises at least an actuation valve (11) which determines the actuation of the main valve (9).

8. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed 7 characterised in that said quick device (6) further comprises at least a control valve (10) which drives the opening of the main valve (9) and is in turn controlled by the actuation valve (11).

9. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 7 ~~or 8~~ characterised in that said main valve (9) comprises a first movable obturator (12) actuated by means of

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a pressuriable first chamber (13), said first obturator (12) being closed position when said first chamber (13) is pressurized and going to the open position when the first chamber (13) is depressurized, said the control valve (10) causing, when it opened, the depressurisation of the first chamber (13).

10. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 8 ~~and 9~~ characterised in that said control valve (10) comprises a second movable obturator (14) actuated by means of a second pressurisable chamber (15), said second obturator (14) being in the closed position when said chamber (15) is pressurised and going in the open position when the second chamber (15) is deprssurised, said actuating valve (11) causing, when it is opened, the depressurisation of the second chamber (15).

11. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 7, ~~8, 9, or 10~~, characterised in the said actuating valve (11) is solenoid valve.

12. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 7, ~~8, 9, 10 or 11~~ charcterised in that said actuating valve (11) is remotely controllable.

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13. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 7, ~~8, 9, 10 or 11~~ characterised in that said actuating valve (11) is manual valve.

14. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 7, ~~8, 9, 10 or 11~~ characterised in that it comprises two parallel actuating valves (11), a manually operated valve and a solenoid valve.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Canceled)

17. (Canceled)

18. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in ~~any of the previous claims~~ claim 1, characterised in that it further comprise a circuit (20) for pressurising said tank.

19. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 9 ~~and 18~~ characterised in that said pressuristaion circuit (20) also pressurizes said first chamber (13), the tank (2) and that first chamber (13) being in fluid communication.

20. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 10~~and 18~~ characterised in that said pressurization circuit (20) also pressurises said the second chamber (15), the tank (2) and the second chamber (15) being fluid communication.

21. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 18~~, 19, or 20~~ characterised in that said pressurization circuit (20) allows the automatically recharging of the tank (2) after each launch.

22. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed ~~in any previous claims~~ claim 1, characterised in that it further comprises means (43) for varying the position of the said seat (8) for the ball (4) to be launched in said launch tube(3).

23. (Presently Amneded) An apparatus as claimed in claim 22 characterised in that said throttling means (37) and said means (43) for varying the position of the seat (8) for the ball (4) are operatively associated to vary the position of the seat (8) according to the regulation of the transfer of the fluid from tank (2) to the launch tube (3) and vice versa, according to a predetermined relationship.

24. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 2 ~~and 23~~ characterised in that said seat (8) for the ball (4) to be launched is rigidly connected to the mobile part (39) of the adjustment means, the displacement of the movable part (39) causing a corresponding displacement of the seat (8) for the ball (4) to be launched within the launch tube (3).

25. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 5 ~~and 23~~ characterised in that each interchangeable ring nut 961) also determines a different positioning of the seat (8) for the ball (4) within the launch tube (3).

26. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in ~~any of the previous claims~~ claim 1, characterised in that between the seat (8) for the ball (4) and the end of the launch tube (3) opposite the open end (7) is also identified, when the ball (4) is in the seat (8), a third chamber (45) in which the fluid expands at the moment of the launch, and in that said exhaust duct (5) is connected to the launch tube (3) in correspondence with the seat (8) for the ball (4).

27. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in ~~any of the previous claims~~ claim 1, characterised in that the tank (2) has variable volume.

28. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in ~~any of the previous claims~~ claim 1, characterised in that it further comprises means for enhancing launch precision (67).

29. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 28 characterised in that said means enhancing launch precision (67) are constituted by an annular element (69) positioned at an appropriate distance from the open end (7) of the launch tube (3).

30. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 29 characterised in that the annular element (69) has a slightly greater inner diameter than the inner diameter of the launch tube (3).

31. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in ~~any of the previous claims~~ claim 1, characterised in that it further comprises launch noise reducing means (68).



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32. (Presently Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 31 characterised in that the noise reducing means (68) are constituted by an by an annular chamber (71), of adequate volume, mounted coaxially to the launch tube (30, and having an inner slit (72) obtained in correspondence with the open end (7) of the launch tube (3), and plurality of lateral slits (73).

33. (Previously Presented) An apparatus as claimed in claim 32 characterised in that the total passage section in said annular chamber (71) is not much smaller than the section of the launch tube (3).

34. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in claim 32 ~~or 33~~ characterised in that the inner surfaces of the annular chamber (71) are coated with sound absorbing material.

35. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in ~~any of the previous claims~~ claim 1, characterised in that said fluid is air.

36. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in ~~any of the previous claims~~ claim 1, characterised in that it

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further comprises a support structure which allows to adjust the orientation of the launch tube (3).

37. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in ~~any of the previous claims~~ claim 1, characterised in that it further comprises a programmable electronic unit which can enable its automate and remotely controlled operation.

38. (Currently Amended) An apparatus as claimed in ~~any of the previous claims~~ claim 1, characterised in that the exhaust duct (5) has a smaller section than the launch tube (3).